**North Dakota Joint Information Center**
**News Release**

**For Immediate Release**
**February 23, 2017**

**Contact: Morton County Public Information Office: 701-595-3596 or 701-426-1587**

## 2:09pm - Oceti Sakowin Camp Officially Cleared of Inhabitants

Bismarck, N.D. – At approximately 10:00 this morning, representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers met with protesters from the Oceti Sakowin camp and discussed USACE priorities to clean up the area and restore the land to its pre-protest condition. Law enforcement then entered the camp around 10:45am to begin clearing the area to create an environment conducive to clean up. All inhabitants of the camp were officially cleared at 2:09pm.

Approximately 50 protesters came to the area where law enforcement entered the camp and law enforcement announced to protesters to disperse and head south to avoid arrest. They did not all comply and approximately 23 arrests were made.

As the clearing progressed, law enforcement eventually arrested a total of 46 protesters. Many protesters exited the camp voluntarily throughout the day.

The coordinated effort between local, state, and out-of-state law enforcement allowed for an extremely successful operation in the midst of a dynamic situation. As law enforcement cleared the area, the state's Bureau of Criminal Investigation began to work through the area to process potential crime scenes.

"The past two days have gone very smoothly in a challenging environment and complex effort to clear the camp," said Gov. Doug Burgum. "Dozens of local, state and federal agencies showed tremendous coordination to ensure the process was conducted safely and securely. Law enforcement exercised restraint and demonstrated professionalism in every respect."

Law enforcement did not use any less-than-lethal munitions today. A veterans group occupying a tent refused to leave voluntarily, saying they would not be violent, but they would only go with passive resistance therefore law enforcement had to carry them out.

"I am very happy to say that we finally introduced rule of law in the Oceti camp," said Kyle Kirchmeier, Morton County Sheriff. "I am hopeful that this announcement brings us closer to finality in what has been an incredibly challenging time for our citizens and law enforcement professionals. Having dealt with riots, violence, trespassing and property

crimes, the people of Morton County are looking forward to getting back to their normal lives."

"I believe I speak for all Morton County residents when I say I'm proud that law enforcement professionals were able to achieve clearing the camp without any major injuries to themselves or protesters," said Morton County Commission Chairman Cody Schulz. "We know this brings us one step closer to closure and now we can focus on the important mission of cleaning up the environment and strengthening our relationship with our neighbors."

The ground conditions within the camp today created hazards in that it was very muddy and some law enforcement vehicles got stuck and heavy equipment was required to remove them.

The Corps' contractor for cleanup is Trinity Analysis & Development Corp. from Shalimar, Florida. The contract is awarded for just over $1 million if all options are exercised. This includes cleanup for Oceti Sakowin and Rosebud. Sacred Stone will be an added phase to the contract when required. The company is expected to be on the Oceti camp barring any weather or logistic delays.

"We're going to continue to work with North Dakota as we aim to have a permissive environment for contractors," said Col. John Henderson, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "We appreciate their assistance and partnership from Morton County which enables us to do our mission to protect the water resources and land resources entrusted to us by the United States."

The two individuals taken by ambulance yesterday include a 17 year-old female who was flown to a Minneapolis medical center with severe burns to her hands and face. Her 10 year-old brother suffered minor burns and was expected to be released from a Bismarck hospital today. The incident is currently under investigation. An arrestee claiming to have a broken hip yesterday was taken to a Bismarck hospital where he was medically cleared and transported to the Morton County Correctional Center.

When the Backwater Bridge and Cannonball River Bridge re-open is still contingent upon future operations.

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